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SUBJECT: OMAN STILL MULLING RE-OPENING OF BAGHDAD EMBASSY

REF: MUSCAT 1065

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo for Reasons 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (C) In follow-up to discussions at the October 31 U.S.-Oman Gulf Security Dialogue (reftel), the Ambassador asked Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary-General Sayyid Badr al-Busaidi on December 12 about the status of plans to re-open Oman's embassy in Baghdad. Sayyid Badr replied that the government was "still debating" the issue and had not reached a decision. Oman was adamant, he added, that it would not put its diplomats "at risk." The Ambassador outlined the security support that the coalition could provide for visits of foreign emissaries, and urged Oman -- if it could not yet re-open its embassy -- to consider sending a small but senior delegation to Baghdad for talks with Iraqi officials. Sayyid Badr stated that Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi had been looking at a visit to Baghdad, but that he was unsure where this now stood. The Secretary-General also noted the decrease in violence in Iraq, and related that the Iranians claimed that the recommendations they made in security talks with the U.S. in Baghdad had contributed to this drop.

¶2. (C) Sayyid Badr expressed his opinion that a competition by different factions for control of resources was a primary factor in the discord in Iraq. Reconciling these competing interests, he said, would go a long way in helping to achieve political stability and improve security further. He then asked the Ambassador to what extent Iraqi PM Maliki was making good on his promises to "operate on a national, not factional, platform." Oman was receiving "mixed reports" from "different sources" on this subject, he stated. For example, he had heard that sectarian affiliation was a primary determinant in the designation of Iraqi ambassadors overseas. Such a practice, he asserted, stood in stark contrast to the need for the Iraqi government to truly represent and work for "all Iraqis." The Ambassador replied that he would endeavor to provide updated information on this subject.
GRAPPO